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FRANÇOIS BONVIN.

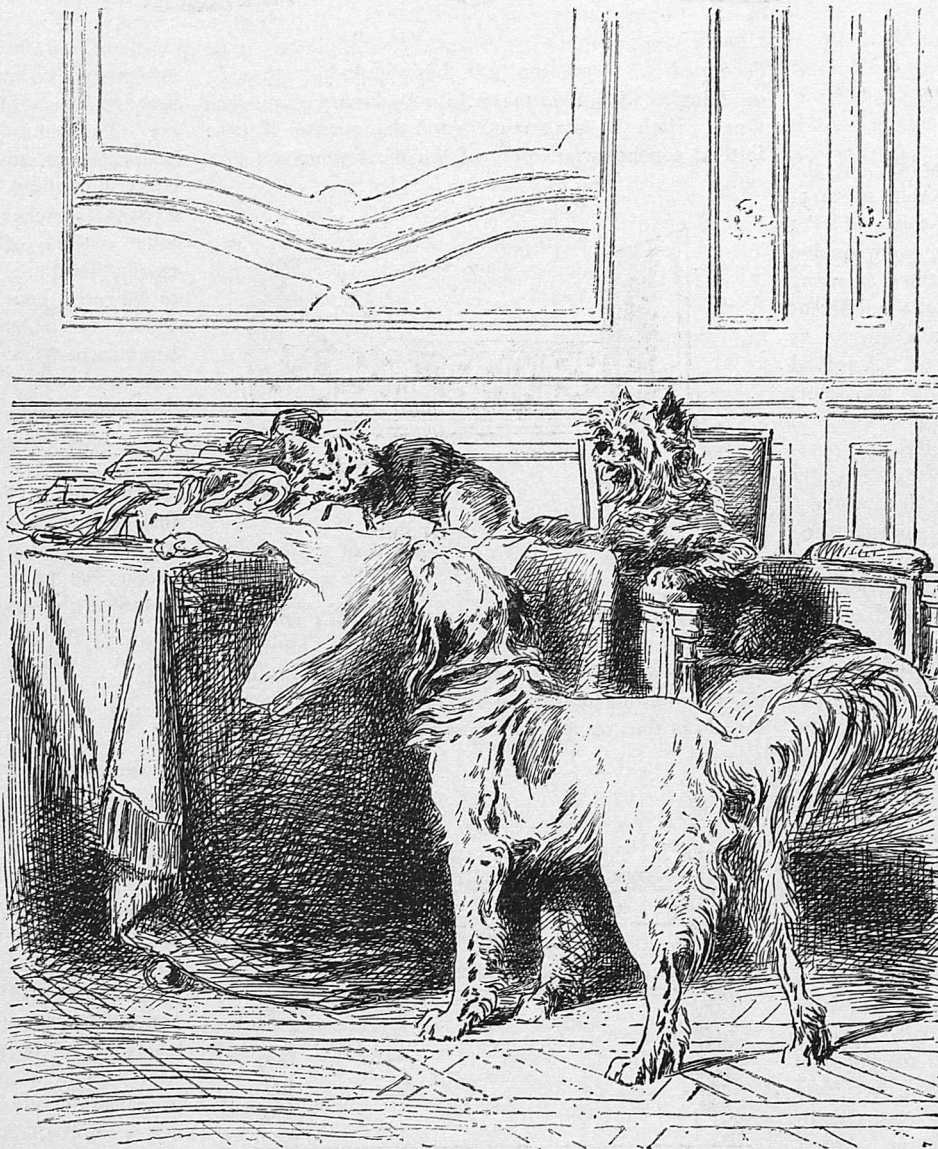
THIS excellent painter died a week before Christmas at the age of seventy-one. In the history of French painting, Bonvin will hold a greater and a more durable place than many artists who have occupied the attention of their contemporaries and made much more noise in the world. Not that Bonvin was ever an unrecognized or a misunderstood genius; the connoisseurs always esteemed him at his real value, but he never became famous and never made a fortune. On the other hand, he was never in absolute misery, as some of his biographers endeavor to make out. Bonvin was simply a plebeian, and he remained plebeian in his ways of living and in his aspirations. He never hankered after a mansion in the Avenue de Villiers; his ideal was a den in the outskirts of the capital, and near to the den a lodging for a niece; for, like those good curés of the old school, François Bonvin always indulged in a niece. In these conditions he smoked his pipe, cracked his joke, drank his bottle, and painted his pictures, about the sale of which he had queer ideas. He was absolutely opposed to the high prices of modern times; three hundred dollars seemed to him the maximum figure for one of his most important pictures; furthermore, he did not care to sell his pictures to anybody that came. It is no wonder, then, that he never made a fortune, and that when old age and partial blindness began to grow upon him he found himself without sufficient resources to fall back upon. This was why last year an exhibition and a sale were organized for his benefit and much inky sympathy spilt in newspaper articles. Bonvin's favorite subjects were familiar interior scenes and still-life pieces, and two of his finest works are the "Refectory" and the "École des Frères." His predecessors in the annals of art were Chardin and the Dutch interior painters. Some of Bonvin's pictures remind one even of the prodigious Pieter de Hooghe, so truly has he rendered the warm, golden and serene light of the abodes of honesty and simplicity. Bonvin's career dates from the Revolution of 1848. During thirty years he exhibited regularly in the Salon, and his work in painting is very considerable. He also made a certain number of etchings, including a dog and several French landscapes while he was at London during the Commune. These etchings are interesting for their sentiment rather than

for the execution, which is laborious and heavy. Very few of this artist's works have found their way to this country. "A Pinch of Snuff," however, which used to be in the late Mary J. Morgan collection, with its rich though sober color, was a fair example of his style. As

guaranteed. It was duly knocked down, laid behind the auctioneer's rostrum until the sale was over, and then the spurious work was sent home to the purchaser. In travelling from town to town, never remaining long in one, this knavish dealer made a good thing of it, since he got rid of all the forged pictures, and still retained the original ones. Another ingenious dodge resorted to by such men is to have a couple of canvases in one frame, one in front of the other, the front canvas being the genuine work, the other a copy of the same. The picture having been knocked down, the auctioneer blandly invites the purchaser to write his signature on the back of the canvas, "So that there may be no mistake." By the end of the sale, the auctioneer's assistant, conveniently operating behind a screen, has extracted the front canvas from the frame—the removal and replacement of a few tacks being all that is necessary—and the spurious picture is handed to the innocent purchaser, who, making sure of his signature on the back, is perfectly satisfied that he has not been taken in.

THE prices paid for pictures nowadays would have surprised Horace Walpole, who, writing to Sir Horace Mann on the 9th of February, 1758, speaks of the "rage of expense in pleasures" which then affected society. "One glaring extravagance," he says, "is the constant high price given for pictures. The other day, at Mr. Furnese's auction, a very small Gasper sold for seventy-six guineas; and a Carlo Maratti, which, too, I am persuaded, was a Guiseppe Chiari, Lord Egremont bought at the rate of £260. Mr. Spencer gave no less than £2200 for the Andrea Sacchi and the Guido from the same collection. The latter is of very dubious

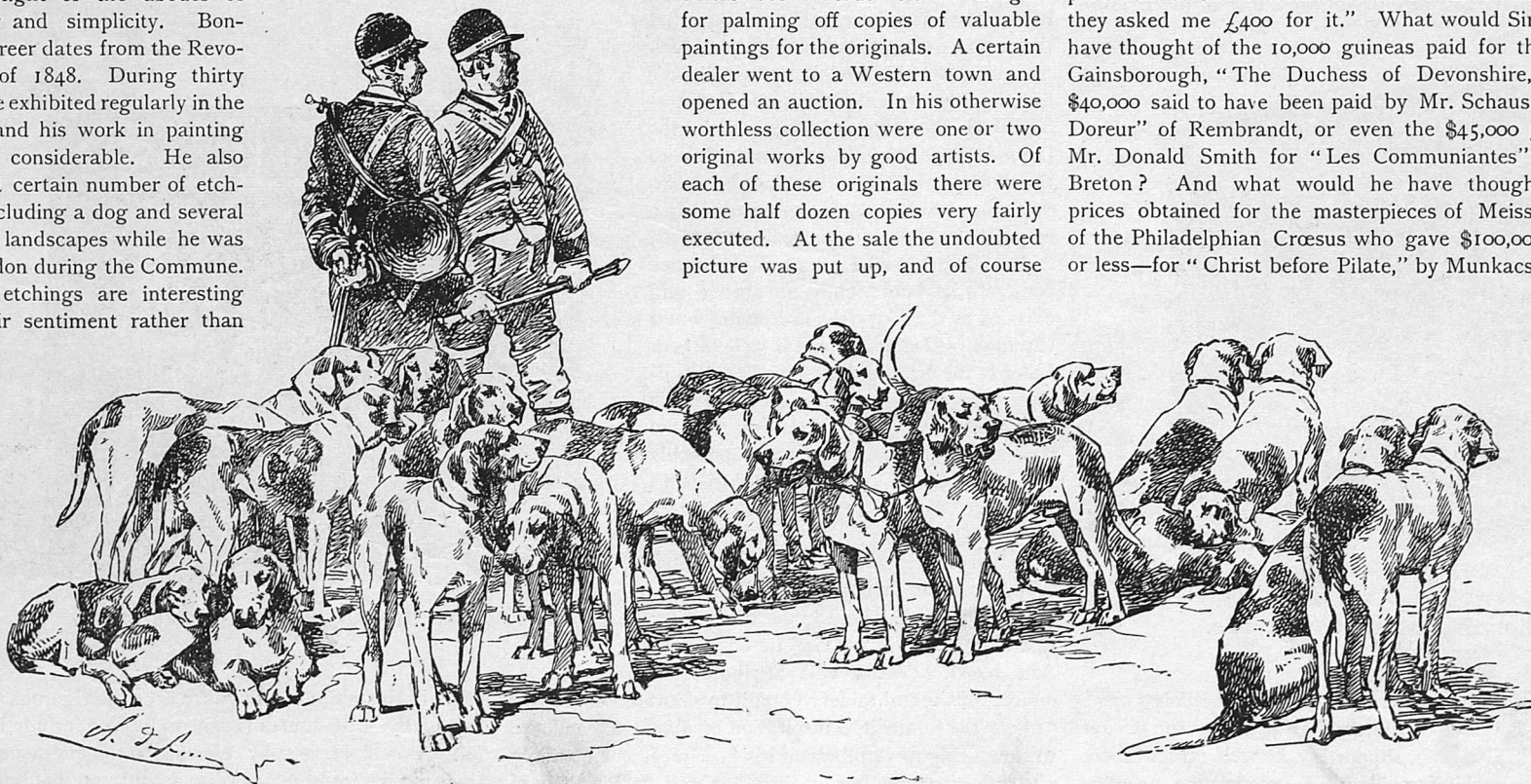
originality. My father, I think, preferred the Andrea Sacchi to his own Guido, and once offered £700 for it; but Furnese said, 'Hang him, it is for him; he shall pay a thousand.' There is a pewterer, one Cleeve, who some time ago gave £1000 for four very small Dutch pictures. I know but one dear picture not sold—Cooper's head of Oliver Cromwell—an unfinished miniature; they asked me £400 for it." What would Sir Horace have thought of the 10,000 guineas paid for the stolen Gainsborough, "The Duchess of Devonshire," or the \$40,000 said to have been paid by Mr. Schaus for "Le Doreur" of Rembrandt, or even the \$45,000 given by Mr. Donald Smith for "Les Communiantes" of Jules Breton? And what would he have thought of the prices obtained for the masterpieces of Meissonier, or of the Philadelphian Cæsus who gave \$100,000—more or less—for "Christ before Pilate," by Munkacsy?



"IN POSSESSION." DRAWN BY EUGENE LAMBERT AFTER HIS WATER-COLOR PICTURE.

a painter, F. Bonvin will rank as one of the very first artists of the second class. THEODORE CHILD.

Now that the season for picture mock auctions has set in, it is well to renew our cautions to our readers to be on their guard against tricks of the trade. There are various clever dodges for palming off copies of valuable paintings for the originals. A certain dealer went to a Western town and opened an auction. In his otherwise worthless collection were one or two original works by good artists. Of each of these originals there were some half dozen copies very fairly executed. At the sale the undoubted picture was put up, and of course



"HUNTING DOGS." DRAWN BY DE PENNE AFTER HIS WATER-COLOR PICTURE.